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RR RUEHBW RUEHLN RUEHPOD RUEHVK RUEHYG  
DE RUEHMO #1500/01 1491340  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 281340Z MAY 08  
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8270  
INFO RUEHDX/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 001500

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [MCAP](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [PROP](#)  
SUBJECT: RUSSIA REVIEW FOR SUSPENSION OF TITLE III OF THE LIBERTAD  
ACT

REF: STATE 52541

11. (U) Summary. In response to Department request for information contributing to a country review for Title III suspension of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act, GOR support for the development of democracy in Cuba has been marginal, and Russia's economic relations with Cuba are limited. However, Russia's business sector recently has expressed interest in possible investment and cooperation with Cuba in the technological, energy and medical fields. End Summary.

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Limited Democracy Efforts  
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12. (U) Post is aware of no major efforts on the part of the GOR to advance democracy and human rights in Cuba. Despite recent efforts to expand ties with Cuba, which rest on historic ties dating back to the Cold War, the GOR has not extended support for and solidarity with the Cuban people by drawing attention to the plight of Cuban prisoners; calling for a democratic transition in Cuba; and supporting Cuba's democratic opposition or civil society.

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Limited Human Rights Efforts  
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13. (U) The GOR has not made public statements in support of democracy following the undemocratic succession of power from Fidel to Raul Castro. In line with Russia's policy of "non-interference in internal matters," the GOR has not called for parliamentary resolutions condemning human rights abuses in Cuba and has not supported Cuba's thriving civil society.

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High Level Diplomatic Visits  
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14. (U) According to press reports, in April 2008, Russian Minister of Transport, Igor Levitin met with his Cuban counterpart, Ricardo Cabrisas, to develop Russian-Cuban cooperation in the banking, energy, transportation, science and technology, and information and communications sectors. Also discussed was the possibility of economic and military collaboration. Levitin was accompanied to Havana by a delegation of over 100 officials and businessmen, who also attended the eighth meeting of the bilateral intergovernmental commission. Levitin called for the modernization of Cuba's Soviet era facilities and equipment. According to press reports, in the future Russia hoped to provide Cuba with new KamAZ trucks, lifting equipment, planes and buses.

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Nature of Investments  
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15. (U) In February 2008, according to press reports, a Russian oil

Company, Lukoil, expressed interest in Cuba's energy sector and was examining the possibility of building refineries in Cuba. Lukoil also was investigating the possibility of surveying the Gulf of Mexico for crude oil deposits. Nafta-Sintez, another Russian energy company, also expressed interest in investing in Cuba's energy sector. According to press reports, Cuban officials expressed interest in acquiring Russian buses to modernize its transportation system. In December 2007, the Russian aviation leasing company Ilyushin Finance provided Cuba with two TU 204-100E airplanes as a part of Cuba's broader effort to modernize its aviation fleet.

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Bilateral Trade Efforts  
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16. (U) According to press reports about Levitin's trip to Cuba in 2007, bilateral trade reached \$363 million dollars and Cuba was Russia's sixth largest trading partner in Latin America. Approximately 29,000 Russian tourists, who do not require entry visas, visited Cuba in 2007. In May 2008, the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry received a delegation of Cuban businessmen who gave a presentation on business investment opportunities in Cuba. This was the largest visit of its kind, led by Raul Becerra, the head of the Cuban Chamber of Commerce, and Alejandro Mustelier, the president of the Cuba-Russia Business Council, together with 29 executives. According to press reports, the Russian business sector has expressed interest in importing Cuban rum, vaccines and medical equipment.

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Limited Exchange Programs  
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17. (U) Post is aware of no major exchange programs that would include scholarships for Russians to study in Cuba; Cuban-paid medical travel for Russian nationals; and Cuban doctors working in Russia. During a business roundtable event on the margins of Levitin's visit, representatives from Russian regions proposed establishing university medical exchanges that would allow Russian doctors to complete their medical internship or residency at Cuban institutions. The roundtable also discussed the possibility of Russian children traveling to Cuban summer camps. According to press reports, the camp proposal was not only intended to promote cultural exchanges between the two countries, but also to provide the possibility of Cuban medical treatment for sick Russian children. We are not aware of any further concrete steps to establish medical exchanges that have been taken since Levitin's visit. From April 1 to 11, 2008, Russian and Cuban medical specialists held a conference in Cuba on men's reproductive health. Over 200 Russian and Cuban urologists and endocrinologists participated in the conference, according to media reports.

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